

February 1, 2011

Dear Charter School Directors,

In the State of Utah, we want to advance the goal of moving all of our students toward preparation for college. We want all of our students to have the motivation to attend college, and the optimism that they will succeed in any college of their choice. At Utah State University we have an opportunity to help you with resources to meet this goal. Utah State University would like to form a partnership with you to apply for a U.S. Department of Education GEAR UP grant to assist students to prepare for, and succeed in, postsecondary institutions. The program can provide a range of academic, advising, teacher professional development, equipment and other support. We are eligible to apply for \$800.00 per student per year for the overall grant, and the grant will be funded for seven years. We envision that the largest portion of these funds will go towards implementation locally in your schools to provide direct support to students, while the remainder will support administrative staff and oversight for all grant partners. As the Utah land grant institution, with campuses and/or centers in every region of the State, Utah State University has the resources, expertise, and capabilities to serve your schools and help meet your needs in areas including teacher development, student education, special education, parent education, and student services that include admissions and financial aid assistance.

Unlike other GEAR UP grants, the partner grant that we will apply for serves an entire cohort of students. Other GEAR UP grant models follow a "priority" system, whereby schools select the students who are qualified for grant services by virtue of their family's low socioeconomic status. Because our partner grant will work with schools where 50% or more of the students qualify for free and/or reduced lunch, you will not have to select students for services. Rather, the grant will serve the entire cohort, beginning with seventh graders, and following them through their first year of college. If a seventh grade is present in the school, the grant can also serve lower grades in that school. Subsequent grants, submitted in response to U.S. Department of Education requests for proposals, will bring additional seventh grade cohorts into the grant project. As a result, this partner grant affects systemic, permanent change in the school system, while serving cohorts of students.

Services may include before-school, in-class, and after-school tutoring; professional development for teachers; student visits to institutions of higher education; equipment (e.g., computers for students), parent engagement, and administrative oversight costs. The grant has the following overarching goals and intervention strategies:

- 1. Improve and accelerate students' academic achievement so they are prepared to enter into and succeed in postsecondary education;
- 2. Educate students and their families about postsecondary education, and help them learn to plan to be prepared academically, financially, and psychologically for college success:
- 3. Improve the motivation and capacity of teachers to help students improve and accelerate their learning to high standards; and

- 4. Develop a strategic alliance of partners to build capacity to sustain efforts significantly beyond the grant period.
- Please see the attached appendix for required and allowable GEAR UP grant activities.

GEAR UP grants are U.S. Department of Education federal programs that prepare students for entry into and success in higher education. All publically funded schools with a student population of which 50% or more qualify for free and/or reduced lunch, and who have a grade seven qualify for this GEAR UP partnership grant. Our data on free/reduced lunch populations for schools is found at: http://www.schools.utah.gov/main/DATA-STATISTICS/Educational-Data/Free-and-Reduced-Price-Lunch.aspx. If the data regarding the free/reduced lunch for the schools in your district is incorrect, and you believe that a school's population is 50% or more free/reduced lunch-qualified, we will work with you to provide the necessary documentation, so that your schools can qualify for this excellent program.

There are some key significant advantages to your schools of partnering with Utah State University on this GEAR UP grant:

First, our plan is to develop a decision-making advisory board made up of the superintendents of our partner schools. This board will be critical in determining how the grant funds are used, in compliance with the grant award, to maximize the use of grant resources for each partner school. This advisory board process will provide a network of statewide support as each school adapts selected programs to meet the needs of students and teachers.

Second, faculty from our nationally ranked Emma Eccles Jones College of Education & Human Services will be engaged with this project to provide additional resources to your schools, using their expertise and experience to facilitate your success. In addition to those in our College of Education & Human Services, Utah State University has faculty members in almost every discipline who specialize in teacher education in their field. We expect to engage these faculty members in providing additional support to you throughout the duration of this grant project.

Third, our Utah State University Office of Student Affairs will be engaged in this project, readily providing your students, teachers, and parents with assistance regarding admissions, financial aid, advising, and general information on the various departments in the university.

Fourth, we are hoping to make a presentation about the partnership grant to your school district administrators and faculty, and to hear what your service priorities would be with these grant funds, so that we may write your priorities into the grant. As such, your priorities will be part of the grant from the outset.

Fifth, Utah State University has the experience to help you provide the matching contributions required of this grant through in-kind services. Among the members of our grant project will be persons who have successfully developed and implemented a formulaic in-kind matching contribution system. They will teach the persons serving the grant at your school how to readily and easily compile these data.

Finally, as the land grant university of the State, with the mission to serve the educational needs of all State constituents, this grant project will engage a cross-section of Utah State University resources, from the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, to the Office of Student Affairs, to our academic colleges, to our regional campuses and centers across the State.

Your next step to partner with us on this grant is to set up an appointment to have members of our grant project team visit your district and school teams, explain the project, and determine which specific needs you would like to have written into the grant. We can also set up a teleconference to answer your questions about this grant. Please contact Vice Provost Yolanda Flores Niemann, at 435-797-8176, or yolanda.fniemann@usu.edu to set up a time when we can speak with you further about this partnership. We look forward to working with you on this important initiative.

Sincerely,

Beth Foley, Ph.D.

Dean, Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services

435-797-1470

Beth.foley@usu.edu

Ronda Menlove, Ph.D.

Vice Provost for Regional Campuses and Distance Education

435-797-7198

Ronda.menlove@usu.edu

Appendix – Required and Allowable GEAR UP Grant Activities

Required GEAR UP grant activities

- Comprehensive mentoring, outreach, and supportive services that include the following activities:
 - o Providing information regarding financial aid for postsecondary education;
 - Encouraging student enrollment in rigorous and challenging curricula and coursework in order to reduce the need for remedial coursework at the postsecondary level;
 - o Implementing activities to improve the number of students who:
 - Obtain a secondary school diploma, and
 - Complete applications for, and enroll in, a program of postsecondary education.

Allowable GEAR UP grant activities

- Providing technical assistance;
- Providing tutors and mentors;
- Providing support services;
- Supporting the development or implementation of rigorous academic curricula, which may include college preparatory, advance placement, or International Baccalaureate programs, and providing participating students access to rigorous core academic courses that reflect challenging state academic standards;
- Supporting dual or concurrent enrollment programs between the secondary school and institution of higher education partners of a GEAR UP Partnership;
- Others activities that support
 - o Meeting challenging state academic standards,
 - o Successfully applying for postsecondary education,
 - o Successfully applying for student financial aid, and
 - Developing graduation and career plans, including career awareness and planning assistance as they relate to a rigorous academic curriculum;
- Providing special programs or tutoring in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics;
- Introducing students to institutions of higher education, through trips and school-based sessions;
- Providing an intensive extended school day, school year, or summer program that offers
 - Additional academic classes.
 - Assistance with college admission applications,
 - o Other activities designed to ensure secondary school completion and postsecondary education enrollment of at-risk children, such as
 - Identification of at-risk children,
 - After school and summer tutoring,
 - Assistance to as-risk children in obtaining summer jobs,
 - Academic counseling,
 - Financial and economic literacy education or counseling,
 - Volunteer and parent involvement,

- Encouraging former or current participants of a GEAR UP program to serve as per counselors,
- Providing skills assessments,
- Personal and family counseling, and home visits,
- Staff development,
- Programs and activities that are specially designed for student who are limited English proficient,
- Enabling eligible students to enroll in Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses,
- Enabling students to enroll in college entrance examination preparation courses,
- Providing services to students in the participating cohort through the first year of attendance an institution of higher education,
- Fostering and improving parent and family involvement in elementary and secondary education by promoting the advantages of a college education, and emphasizing academic admission requirements and the need to take college preparation courses, through parent engagement and leadership activities, and
- Disseminating information that promotes the importance of higher education, explains college preparation and admission requirements, and raises awareness of the resources and services provided by the eligible entities to eligible students, their families, and communities.